2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
KaKuse

and say: 'You, Father, stand by me.' We bring him back when we have bathed. He also bathed there, he is present![1] 764 775

QUESTION: The meaning of the shaving?

KAKUSE: The doctor takes a bunch of *ikisajelo* grass and a little millet beer and then makes two cross lines in the hair before shaving, and he shaves us.

QUESTION: Why?

KAKUSE: It is the ritual, we drive him off.

Being unable to get any more I then suggested that the *ikisajelo* and beer represented the shade and that they took him on to their bodies in order to throw him off.

Kakune: 'Yes, that's it, you are very intelligent for you understand it! That's it!'

QUESTION: And is the *ikisajelo* grass the shade's which the seers uproot? [824]

KAKUSE: Yes, we have heard that long ago there were three seers (*abalungulula*), X and Y and Z [I missed the names], who went with two village headmen to look; one seer uprooted the *ikisajelo* grass to look beneath at the land of the shades and he called the village headmen to look. When they shrank back and said 'He!' he said it was a homestead such as those above.

QUESTION: Did this happen in the day-time?

KAKUSE: It happened in the day-time, in the open, not in a dream. But later on, when one village headman had gone he said: 'Let me look again.' He tried to uproot it but the *ikisajelo* grass was stuck, it would not come up. But all that happened a long time ago; seers are not seen nowadays. And when we have finished everything, at the time of destroying the ritual house, the doctor touches us all with the razor, that is the tuft (*itemulo*).

QUESTION: Is this before the beer of inheritance? 764

KAKUSE: Yes, before the beer, on the day of bathing. It means that letting the 'hair of the corpse' grow is finished, we have finished. You may drink freely. And have we written about the roasted chicken and the bananas?[2]

G. W.: No.

KAKUSE: What? No? But we all eat these with our fellow villagers—and a bull if we have killed one, for we kill a bull if we have it—at the bathing in the stream. And in the evening the doctor prepares the

[1] The statement above was not made quite so straightforwardly as it is written down; at certain points Kakuse stopped and I prompted him either with: 'And then?' or 'What does that mean?' There were no leading questions and I took down his words exactly.

[2] Our best informants often asked whether what they told us was properly recorded.

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front. See, the man ejects semen! Does it not go inside? The woman becomes heavy and oversteps the bride.' §27 §34

Even after she has been treated, the bride avoids any close contact with those who are 'heavy'; in particular they are excluded from her hut. Her own mother 'does not sleep with the father at all from the time the girl grows up until she goes to her husband, and begins intercourse with him. It is taboo. She says to her husband: "See, I am keeping my child company." ' But the 'play' of her companions does not matter, for intercourse *inter crura* does not make anyone heavy; it is the semen of a man in a woman's belly which makes her heavy, and her husband also, through contact with her. §34 §33

The second medicine used at the puberty ritual is the *ikipiki*,[1] made from the bark of certain small-leafed forest trees. The same species is used by many Nyakyusa families, but the identity of the person who provides it is very important, for it is identified with the blood (*ililopa*) of the family. In the puberty-marriage ritual the groom's mother provides the *ikipiki* with which the bride washes at her husband's (if she is a senior wife), at the rite of 'putting her in' (*ukwingenia*), at the second washing with her husband, at the shaving, and at the washing before jumping over fire. The same medicine is used each time. It is also sprinkled on the bananas she eats at the *ukwingenia*. The bride's own mother, however, provides the *ikipiki* which is added to her porridge and buried under the hearth the day she first menstruates, and that used for washing her father, or brother, and mother at the *ukwingenia*. Also, should it be known that the bride is not a virgin, the mother-in-law will refuse to bring her *ikipiki* and it must be provided for each rite by her mother. The medicine is in itself awesome (*nsipa*). Kanitile's wife remarked one day that the bride slept with one of her maids in front of her, 'at her stomach', and one behind. We asked why. She replied: 'That *ikipiki* medicine! It's awesome. She fears to be alone.' 'If someone has not given her the *ikipiki* to drink and heavy ones cook food and give it to her she goes bad, she has periods without cessation.' 'The mother gives porridge with *ikipiki* to the girl and buries some under the hearth. That means may she be heavy in her stomach, for if heavy ones warm themselves at the fire in the house, she is in danger of going bad, she will have a continuous issue of blood.' 'If the *ikipiki* were not given, her period §89 §41

[1] *Un-piki*: a tree of any species. *Ikipiki*: medicine made from the bark of certain species (one is a *Mumemendo*) and used in the rituals of death, puberty, and birth. §20

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Kukwe

764 A mash made of beans, lentils and pumpkin-seeds was salted, to be eaten with millet porridge; one unsalted was prepared to be eaten with bananas. Each principal then washed again with water and powdered medicine at the doorway. The unsalted mash and bananas were handed to each of the principals to eat. The salted mash and porridge (in one ball) was placed on one of the hearth-bricks and each one came and stooped and bit (as with the bananas before outside), then took away the mouthful to eat. 'We used to put it up on the wall, we have abandoned the custom nowadays.' Mpogo begged for 'only a little'. Finally, each principal sat in the doorway and the officiant smeared a cross on his head with a paste of millet flour (previously ground on the bark-cloth) and water.

It was 6 p.m., the sun sinking, as I left.

The kinsmen present are marked on the genealogy on p. 273. There were also three neighbours one of whom was a younger full brother of the village headman, Mwambuputa. The headman was not there himself.

(*b*) *Farewell to Kalata's mother* (*Kukwe*)

Record of G. W. 6/11/36

Kalata's mother died on Monday evening, November 2, and was buried the next day.

KALATA: They will perform the ritual on me and my younger brother and on my son; if we had a sister alive they would do it for her too, but we have none. . . . The officiant is Sijele, wife of Mwainombola. He is a relative of ours, our mothers avoided him. He was their 'father-in-law'. . . . My father is already dead.

A young man present had gone for the *ikipiki* medicine to wash with and brought back a plant, *epazati*, but the officiant (Sijele) had seen it and gone for another, saying 'that is the *ikipiki* of the Sangu'. However, two older men and the dead woman's younger sister disagreed with her and said *epazati* was right.

There were present one classificatory father of Kalata with a small son, Kalata's own small son, Kalata's younger brother, Kalata himself, a young man *ustasi* to Kalata (son of the dead woman's brother) and a small son; the wife and the sister of the *ustasi*, a younger sister of the dead woman, and another young woman, all with mourning belts tied round them. A fifth young woman had no belt.

The sister's daughter began to grind millet. A young woman went off to look for medicines for sweeping out the rubbish (*imisala*). Everyone gave her advice as to where to find them. Sijele came in with a bunch of twigs for sweeping, and a separate one for washing. There was more discussion of *epazati*. Sijele said that *epazati* was for bathing with after the burial, not for washing with now.

A young woman began to clear the rubbish (*akasuya imisala*) with the

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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small pot for cooking the beans; each poured a little in turn, as they 764
had done with the oil-seeds, and said the same words as before. The officiants then picked the flowering head of a banana and selected a petal or two to use as a basin to prepare the ointment in. The beans, however, they did not throw into the pot, because they had done this before, they just put some in to cook. When the beans were all ready for making the mash, but before they took them off the fire, the officiants shaved the principals' hair. The officiants made them sit down on a bark-cloth spread on the ground and drew lines where they were going to shave with a bunch of grass called '*ifisejelo*', which had been dipped in some lees of beer. They began by shaving along the lines marked with the lees, one from forehead to neck, one from ear to ear over the crown. Then, as they shaved each in turn, they mocked him, saying: 'Poor fool, it found its mother (grandmother) was dead. Went stealing and they've speared it on the head!' After the officiant had shaved the lines and mocked them they helped each other to finish shaving their heads.

The mash was made by mixing the beans with the plantain that they had stolen previously, and with a sweet banana which they cut for the occasion. The plantain they say is the man, the sweet banana the woman. While mixing the mash together they took out of it a bean, a plantain and a sweet banana for each of the principals. And to some of the mash they added salt, to some not.

Then they went to bathe. They cut leaves of plantain and of sweet banana. First they tied the plantain leaves round the principals' loins and then the sweet banana leaves on top, and round their necks they tied one plantain leaf also. Then they stuck one plantain in front, and a sweet banana behind, and went to bathe. The principals wore cloths under the leaves because of the women present.

When we reached the stream the principals sat down in the water looking downstream. The doctor twisted grass into pads and put a pad on each one's head with a pebble on the pad. Then she put pebbles in the forks of all their fingers and toes, and in their mouths and ears, and made them hold a flower in each hand. They lay down in the water looking first upstream, for that is the direction of BuKukwe, and then finally downstream again. Stones, leaves and bananas fell into the water and then they bathed themselves in the ordinary way, each still wearing a cloth.

On the way back the doctor picked a kind of water grass (*ulukeke*) and a certain flower called *ulungwelungo* and made each of the principals [824] ●
hold some grass in one hand and a flower in the other. When we reached the little hut (in the path between house and river) the principals threw the grass and the flower on to its thatch. Also they had brought water in a calabash from the stream, and this they poured on the thatch where they had thrown the flower. As the water dripped

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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754 QUESTION: When he says it is sorcery, does he mean that the snakes have been sent by someone?

MWANIFU: Yes, Mwaipaja (G. W.), you understand.

5/1/38

764 Katasya died during the night. I came to the burial with the doctor, Mwakańamale, meeting Mwamalunda on the road. They told me that the son, Mwakanjwike, had fled from the funeral. 'It is said that he had made love to three of his father's wives. They all fled, the three women and the young man. Yes, they will take them to a waterfall to cleanse them.'

763 I sat by Mwaipopo, the chief. There was a dispute about the autopsy. Kasitile came to the chief to say: 'They are refusing to examine him.' 'Why are they refusing? There is much illness about. Let us examine him and *know*.' Mwaipopo spoke with heat. Then a relative came and told him: 'Katasya said: "Do not examine me when I die."' Mwaipopo: 'Why? There is that case of the son (incestuous adultery) or perhaps it is sorcery, or perhaps, if the neighbours refuse to examine him, it is a confession that they have bewitched him. Let us examine him. It will trouble us later on. Also, he was praying to the shades, saying: "The millet failed." Then he died! Let us examine him and know.'

764 763 Five cows and a bull were killed. About twenty cattle were standing in the herd. The corpse was carried around with wailing and drumming and the cattle were driven round also. Then followed the autopsy. I went with Mwanyoso, with Kasitile's relative, Mwakasenga, and with the brother of the dead man. A woman doctor performed it with a bamboo knife. Another woman kept a hand on the head of the dead man meanwhile. 'You brave ones!' was the comment of the other women, two or three of whom stood watching. The doctor hesitated, as if in fear, before the first cut. Mwanyoso encouraged her: 'Go ahead!' As she pulled out the bowels we all crowded round to look. Mwanyoso said: 'Ropes,' but no one else took this up, and he did not 763 mention it again. They looked into the chest and found something 754 wrong. 'He is burned within! It is sorcery!'

MWANYOSO: We chiefs do not fear the commoners, we look for wounds and speak if they are there. But there are none. Look well! If he had been speared there would be much blood, and wounds. But he is burned within. They have worked sorcery against him with Mwangwala. That is the name of the medicine which some Nyakyusa plant. [324] It's sorcery! Then is that of the country (i.e. witchcraft) not there?

It is not there.

How about the son?

That we do not find. He just has diarrhœa.

Mwanyoso then told Mwaipopo (the chief): 'We have examined him, it is sorcery.'

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We have already seen in two examples that a man, when returning to the chiefdom from which he has moved, may recover his old gardens even though he builds in a different village. And it frequently happens also that a man comes to a village and asks for garden-land only, continuing to live in another village, or even in another chiefdom. Such requests the villagers always, so far as I know, grant willingly, for once a man has taken up land in a new village there is every prospect that he will one day move altogether and build there. In case of sickness he is more likely to move to the group where he is already half-established and sure of a warm welcome than anywhere else.

When a man moves he has the right to reap the crops standing in his old gardens so soon as they ripen, but after that the ground, save in the case of craters, reverts to the joint ownership of villagers and chief. And his building plot and bananas revert to them immediately. The next-door neighbours on either side keep the bananas clean and eat the fruit themselves until the plot and the bananas are given by the villagers, with the chief's approval, to another man. If the previous holder has moved to a place without bananas and not very far away he may, in the first year, send to his late neighbours and ask to be allowed to cut and carry away some of the banana fruit "for my bananas in my new plot have not yet grown." But his request is of grace and not of right, it may be refused. If the villagers like and respect him and hope to persuade him to return later it will always be granted, but if they dislike him and are glad to be rid of him then it will not. If the plot is a separate one without immediate neighbours then no one keeps the bananas clean and, unless someone else is given the plot soon, they get choked with weeds and die.

When a man dies the heir takes his wives, his cattle and his moveable property, and, if he comes to live in the dead man's village, his land also. But if the heir remains in his own old village[1] he has no rights over the dead man's land. The situation is then exactly comparable to that which obtains when a man moves from one village to another, his land rights in the old village lapse.

Rights in trees differ in some respects from rights in land and they differ also for different kinds of trees; and here, as an added complication, we are also faced with a difference of local custom.

Prior to the introduction of new trees by Europeans the only ones of any great value to the Nyakyusa were the bamboo (*ihilasi*) and the *anyu-ngati* tree, whose botanical name I have been unable to find out. Bamboos

[1] Owing to the age grouping among villagers and the long period which traditionally separated one pregnancy from another in a woman's life it is unusual to find full-brothers in the same village.

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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423 are used for house building, while the *syunguti* produces a fruit (*indilolo*) ●824 which is both delicious to eat and also full of seeds which are dried and crushed for ointment (*inyemba*). Of the two trees the bamboo is the more valuable.

423 Now among the Kukwe and Selya groups rights in these trees are somewhat similar to rights in the valuable crater plots. When a man 425 moves, his bamboos and *syunguti* trees, unlike his bananas, do not revert 621 to the villagers; normally they continue to belong to his nearest kinsman in that chiefdom, who cuts and uses the bamboos and picks the fruits of the *syunguti* trees. If the villagers give the site to another man then the newcomer has no rights over these trees unless the kinsman himself gives them to him. But it sometimes happens that, where only *syunguti* trees and not bamboos are involved, the kinsfolk do not bother to exercise their rights; then the trees are treated like bananas, picked by the neighbours until a newcomer is given that plot, and then by him.

423 If however, among the Selya and Kukwe groups, a man moves 425 leaving no kinsfolk near at hand, then the chief (*umalafyale*) as the supreme 628 overlord has a right to his trees, and if they are near the chief's own place this right is exercised; he cuts and uses the bamboos and his wives pick the *syunguti* trees. If another man is given the land by the villagers to build on then he goes and asks the chief to allow him some of the *syunguti* trees, and his request is usually granted, the chief gives him two or three of the trees, keeping two or three for himself. But the bamboos, being more valuable, are usually kept altogether by the chief. If, however, the ownerless trees are at a distance from the chief's place then he normally does not trouble to claim the *syunguti* trees but only the bamboos. The former are at first picked by the neighbours and later given by the villagers to a newcomer together with the site. And, even with the bamboos, if they are a long way from the chief's place a "good chief," they say, will allow the newcomer to cut some of them without payment; but it is wholly within the chief's power to keep them all for himself if he wishes, and "bad chiefs" do so. Furthermore a chief does occasionally also exercise his right to claim an ownerless *syunguti* tree at a distance. If one of his wives comes and complains to him that she has no *syunguti* tree of her own, then he takes her to a site from which someone has recently moved leaving ownerless trees behind and there he gives her one of the trees; the rest he leaves as usual to the villagers and so to the newcomer.

423 Bamboos are men's property and only a man can claim them but 621 *syunguti* trees can be claimed by a kinswoman, a sister or a daughter, of the old owner if none of his near kinsmen have troubled to do so.

423 We must here take note of a most significant modern development. 178 In the old days rights in trees could only be exercised by members of the

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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824

6. YOUNG CHIEF WITH HIS TREES

[Facing p. 54]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

symbol of potency,[1] and we suggest that this also is an element in the ritual of the 'coming out', for the fertility of the chiefdom is thought to be bound up with the virility of the chief.

There are a number of stories about the way in which Mwakyusa (38) surpassed his brothers and one of them tells how each brother made fire and set alight the pasture land (for traditionally parts of the pasture land were fired each season to provide fresh grass for grazing in the early spring), and the fires started by the elder brothers soon died out, but that started by Mwakyusa 'burned for a whole month'. This is interpreted as an omen of his greatness as a chief: fire, potency, lordship are inextricably linked.

At the 'coming out' all things are made new. No matter how crowded the country the young men must move to new sites and the shelters in which they live must be new, though, as will be shown, they do not necessarily move to *unoccupied* country. On their new site the young men live as bachelors, milking their cows and cooking for themselves on their new fires the meat of the cattle they seize, the bananas and grain brought by their wives and mothers. Meat is abundant, for the young chief now rules and has the right to take what cattle he chooses, even from the villages of the old men in his country. 'It was as if there were war, the young men seized cattle, food, and women', and though they did not fight their fathers directly, as the Meru did, they clearly asserted their power. And, as so common further south, the accession of a chief was the occasion for raiding the neighbours: the young men, we were told, went forthwith to test the efficacy of the magic spears and the medicines with which their chief and headmen had been treated. Or the chiefs might lead a battue to clear the country of wild pig, as Mwakatumbula (Mwambete 162) did directly after his 'coming out'. Well fed and exuberant, the young men dance and display their cattle, and entertain visitors lavishly, for every chief seeks to attract men to his country by his hospitality.

Then they set up the sign and memorial of the chieftainship: they plant cuttings of two species[2] of *ficus*, *indola* which is much used as a shade tree, and *umpandapanda* from which bark-cloth is made. Close to these the first house of the chief and that of his senior village headmen are built, and the trees also mark the

[1] Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 124, 143.

[2] When writing *Good Company* I mistakenly thought that two cuttings of the same species were planted. Cf. *Good Company*, p. 27.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
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future boundary between the two halves of the chiefdom, where it will split the next generation. They serve as beacons[1] and are cited as evidence both of the 'coming out' and of the division of land in any later dispute. At the same time the trees are symbols of chieftainship and with their growth the success of the reign is mystically linked. According to one account, 'four headmen fetch the cuttings and the young chief stands between them (*vide plate* 6) and tells the trees to grow well, and the others say: "We are planting you likewise, we are at the ritual of establishing a new chieftainship, you are a symbol for our chief, spread branches that our young headmen and other people may rest in your shade." ' A doctor assists at the planting, burying at the roots a live white sheep and medicines, which, it is said, later turn into the lions or leopards which protect the trees from the impious (*vide infra*, p. 58); and he sweeps beneath the trees, a symbol of what the senior headman must do in future, for it is his duty to 'watch over the trees'. In Nyakyusa thought, village headmen are an integral part of chieftainship—it cannot exist without them—and the trees symbolize *both* the chief and his lady and the two senior headmen. The same informant (well known as a doctor for the 'coming out') told us: 'It means we are planting the chief and his lady; *umpandapanda* is the herd to herd *indola*, which is the more important. *Umpandapanda* is the woman, it may dry up, but *ulupando* (*indola*) never does; it is the chief, it is familiars (*ulupege*). but *umpandapanda* is not', and a moment or two later, 'the *ulupando* is the senior village headman, *umpandapanda* is the junior headman'. The strength of the chief is associated with the growth of the trees. If these trees go dry the reign will not be successful, the chief will be defeated in war. If they flourish and grow the reign will be successful, the chief is a ruler. The *indola* planted for Mwaijonga (82) is shown proudly by his great-grandson, and Mwambete (162) who had a long reign and an enormous family boasted of the size of his *umpandapanda*—'a great spreading tree'. Ideally the young chief should, in due course, sit in the shade of his *indola* with his headmen, to settle disputes.

After the trees are planted the young men build their senior headman's house and the doctor sets up his hearth bricks, burying medicine beneath them also. The marriage of the chief follows.[2]

[1] cf. D. Kerr-Cross, 'Crater-Lakes north of Lake Nyasa', *The Geographical Journal*, v, IV (1895), p. 117.

[2] According to most accounts, but *vide infra*, p. 56.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

CHAPTER VI

LAND AND POWER

643 561 423 THE crux of the chiefs' 'coming out' was a redistribution of power and of land, and we must pause in our description of the ritual cycle to discuss the relation between chiefdoms and villages and the land, and to consider more closely the balance of power between successive generations.

(*a*) THE TERRITORIAL ALIGNMENT OF CHIEFDOMS AND VILLAGES

173 361 Tradition makes it clear that the heroes came to a sparsely occupied country and that their descendants gradually spread out as their numbers increased. The settlers chose to live on hillocks overlooking the surrounding country. Lubaga and [103] Mbande, the seats of the two 'divine kings' are commanding sites. [778] The grove of Kabale, where the ancestors of the Kukwe chiefs first established themselves, is on an eminence rising from the plateau, and Kambasekela (near the Mbaka bridge) on which the early chiefs Mwaipaja (21) and Mwaipopo (26) were buried is a hill very like Mbande, overlooking the plain.

361 [824] Unlike most of their neighbours the Nyakyusa show a preference for cleared and cultivated land, planted with bamboos and the oil-bearing *unsyunguti* trees (*Trichillia supp.*)[1] as well as the great *umwali* (*Chorophora excelsa*) which, in their view, adds dignity to the homestead.[2] A study of the trees planted at the 'coming out' and the sacred groves in Mwaipopo's chiefdom (C 24)[3] shows that for four generations the ruling chiefs (descendants of Mwaijonga 82) have established their principal villages within a quarter of a mile of one another, and for seven generations the descendants of Mwakisambwe (30) have lived within two or three miles of one another (*vide* plan, p. 101), though there were acres of fertile land

[1] I am indebted to Mr. P. B. Nightingale, Forestry Officer, Tukuyu, for giving me the botanical names of these and other trees.

[2] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 77-8.

[3] C followed by a number is the reference number of a chiefdom as listed in the genealogies of chiefs.

12: Bisgaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Haya FN8

H 342 As indicated above, the floor is covered with grass. Various domestic utensils may be seen, stuck into thin screens of plant material.

H 342 178 But this old, beautiful type of hut is very much on the decline. It is costly to make and to keep in repair, and the thick straw roof is, admittedly, highly inflammable. A flying trip round Lake Victoria clearly shows how the straw roofs in the banana groves are being replaced by corrugated iron. This change may even have another reason, viz. the fact that fodder for cattle is in short supply and that the grass for roofs is hard to come by. No doubt, it is a question of time when the fine old Haya hut will have disappeared.

N 114 In the Southern Highlands, where I was given the opportunity to stay for three months at various Danish mission stations, I visited the village round the Rungwe mission, the neighbouring villages of Ilolo and Kikota, and some villages near the Rutenganio mission station, I made a trip to Lake Nyasa and another to the Poloto mountains. I must admit to a limited knowledge of drawing technique and of house construction, but I have measured a number of houses and sketched their plan and also the furnishings I found in them. The positioning of the various objects has been established.

N 361 [342 356] The high standard of dwellings of the Banyakyusa is truly to be wondered at. The houses, clustered in villages, often along a winding street, lie intermingled with banana and coffee bushes. The houses are large and their interior is clean. Often two or three houses belong to one family, and, if so, will be grouped round a courtyard.

N 342 [824] Even if you could find houses built from sun-dried bricks and fired tiles, most were from bamboo with a grass roofing.

All houses stand on a clay base which, though not very high, no doubt means some protection against penetration of ground moisture during the heavy rains of April–June.

N [824] Besides bamboo, sometimes the bole of tree fern, *makeke*, is used in outer walls. Such tree fern stems have not the carrying capacity of bamboo, but they are far more resistant to rot. Among the other common features of the existing types of houses, should be mentioned the mud clods, the size of rolls that from the inside are pressed between the vertical bamboo poles; also, the inner wall is rough-cast with a mixture of mud and cow manure; the floor is from tamped clay. In some places you find very fine floors in which a pattern has been rolled into the wet clay; to this end a short length of the stem of the banana cluster has been employed, viz. the length between the seats of the male and the female flowers. Also employed are another plant stem, or an empty corn cob.

N [237] [531]

N 354 595 In all houses where women live, there are one or more hearths. The presence of two hearths in one house usually means that the husband has two wives, each wife having her own hearth, either in the common house or in a house of her own.

N 342 The houses always have a kind of ceiling made from bamboo sticks and carried

12: Bisgaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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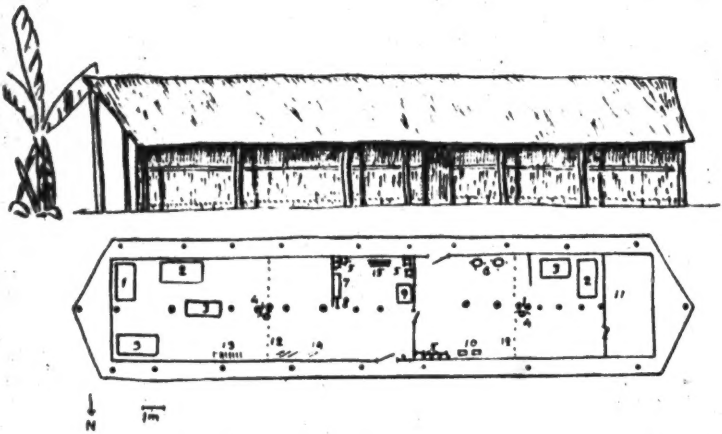

An *ikibaga* in the village of Kisondela, the district of Rutengalo, belonging to a man with two wives. The rooms have bamboo ceilings from dotted lines to either gable. Posts reaching to ridge of roof are filled in. 1, husband's bed; 2, wife's bed; 3, child's bed; 4, hearth; 5, hens' nests; 6, water jar; 7, roost; 8, ladder; 9, table; 10, stools; 11, store-room; 12, dotted lines show limitation of ceiling; 13, small objects; 14, working material; 15, sleeping mat.

born. On page 357, he reports how the boys, when 7 or 10 years old, will leave their parents' house to live in long, rectangular cowhouse-like houses big or small, in a special youngsters' quarter at the far end of the village. On page 358 he writes: In many cases you do not know for certain whether you are dealing with a youngsters' house or a cowhouse—for the cattle may well be kept in these houses—or the herdsmen may sleep in the cowhouses. However, this mostly holds true of the low-lying Konde country, while on the other hand, in the high country, the cattle is usually kept in the dwelling houses. On pages 371 and 372, he relates how the cattle is tied to posts at night, and he shows a picture of a cowhouse.

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He also refers (on page 376) to the use of the rectangular house for married men besides the boys. The difference is seen in the fact that these houses are not roughcast with mud, as this work is the province of women. Finally, he reports that, during the last few years of his stay in the Konde country, he saw Konde houses being built under increasing influence of the coastal culture, in imitation of the Swahili houses. They were roughcast with mud inside and out, and had a verandah supported by posts.

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In 1955, many *ikibagas* could be seen. Some were for the cattle, but most were dwelling houses for married people. (Boys aged 7–10 and upwards until the marriageable age lived in ramshackle boys' houses, the material of which was not bamboo, but a thinner grass, resembling bamboo very much. These houses stood

[824]
[855]

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against the wrong-doer. It is supposed that after this procedure sickness or even death may come to that person. Another method consists of laying a bewitched object on the path usually used by the offender; with the same result. Such bewitching is practised, for instance, when a quarrel has broken out between relatives. With the Nyakyusa any quarrelling with kinsmen is considered a very serious crime, as such a conduct is apt, in their estimation, to destroy the highly-valued family harmony.

3. Another day a ceremony *(ubunyago)*[6] to end mourning was held at Katumba. Some time before an older child had died, and now they were gathered to take leave of the dead[7].

At some distance from the hut, on the open space before it, a square represented the grave, in which the blossom of a banana[8] was interred, representing the dead. The mourners knelt at this grave and touched it with their elbows, knees and foreheads[9]. Each of the chief mourners had to do this, according to the belief of the Natives, lest he should fall into madness.

The next act was performed by the *unnyago*[10], the leading person of the ceremony, one in full knowledge of the rites. Immediately before the door of the hut of the mourning parents, the *unnyago* threw the collections of corn, brought by the participants in small baskets in honour of the dead, together into a big basket, and uttered the names of the contributors addressing the dead. The other participants repeated these names.

Then the mourners went into the hut; but, after some moments, they reappeared one by one and each one, as he left the door in a crouching position, was softly struck on his neck by the *unnyago* with a piece of the trunk of a banana plant. It was explained to me that this ceremony would induce new strength to the mourners, who were weakened by the death of their relative.

The portion of the ceremony which followed, consisted in the forming of a line by the mourners between the hut and the grave. The persons now stood straddle-legged on leaves of banana, the *unnyago* at the

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[6] Cf. *Wilson*, Conventions of Burial, p. 9, n. 4: nounyago.

[7] *Wilson* has described burials *(ifwa*, sg.) of adult persons; nevertheless, I think, my description will be of some value.

[8] Cf. my Chaga Notes, Bantu Studies, XV, p. 392.

[9] Cf. *Fülleborn*, p. 328.

[10] Cf. *Mackenzie*, p. 296; pl. *banyago*, p. 51; *Wilson*, Introduction, p. 287, *avanyago* (hereditary priests).

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ancestors and of Kyara[17]. At the same time he moved his curved wood to and fro on the ground and when he did so, it indicated a negative answer from the beings invoked. But when he was asked: "Is the guilt for the sickness to be found in the husband of the chief's sister?", he was unable to move his wood as before; he could only stamp it on the ground, and this meant an affirmative reaction of the invoked spirits. Now, therefore, the meeting had reached its aim.

I asked the diviner to tell me how he had acquired his faculty. He explained that (besides the necessary inner disposition) the payment of a fee for the medical preparation was necessary in order to become a diviner[18]. This outfit consisted in a special vaccination by a learned diviner. For this purpose the neophyte was incised by his master on different spots on the upper side of the knuckles, and in these small incisions was rubbed a medical powder. By these means the initiate may be inspired by the prophesying spirits. These influences are then felt by the diviner as a power which directs the movements of his hand in the manner described.

6. Near the hut of the chief's principal wife was a "sacred" banana plant, in the grove opposite to the chief's hut and in the grove with the grave of the chief's father already described. At particular times, when any need demands it, the chief offers a prayer in this place to his ancestors[19]. The sickness of his sister, for instance, was such an occasion for him to address the ancestors. I was invited by the chief to witness this act; but I raised objections, telling him that my presence might perhaps rather cause the anger than the help of his ancestors. In reality, I did not want the chief to stage a theatrical act on my behalf. But the chief rejected my excuses and explained that he would act in the same manner as if I were not present, because he had made up his mind to this prayer. The chief was assisted during this ceremony by Mwainyekule who presented to the chief a calabash of water as he arrived at the banana plant devoted to this purpose. The chief took some mouthfuls of the water and squirted it towards the banana plant. Then he recited the names of his ancestors and begged them to help his sister.

7. During one afternoon, I was told that a ceremony to end the initiation of a (betrothed) girl was going on in a family of the village.

[17] name of the supreme spiritual being.
[18] Cf. *Mackenzie*, p. 226.
[19] *Mackenzie* refers that such a place is named "ikiyinja", "the familiy place oft prayer" (pp. 144, 197), but without indication of the locality, as Karonga.

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342 353 622 778 [775] [824] he had received this object from his ancestors and it must always hang on this spot, as the ancestral spirits *(ubusyuka)*[26] themselves controlled its presence. It consisted of an *unswigara*, i. e. the tail of an ox, but the upper part of it was hollow. In this hollow part medicines *(ifingila)*[27] were kept. Yet another magical medicine, in the shape of a piece of bark of the tree called *Erythrophleum Guineense*[28] was fastened at the upper end of this sign. When my European attendant immediately said to the chief: "And from this piece you make your *mwafi*"[29], the chief exclaimed in astonishment: "*Umne wana Kyara!*" (You are sons of Kyara! i. e. You Europeans know everything.)

After this there was no more delay in revealing to us some more features of this sign of dignity. According to the belief of his fathers this object possessed a special *amaka* (power)[30], e. g. to defeat enemies, if the chief were to hold it directly against them. Also if a thief were [789] to try to enter the room by force, by making a hole beneath the wall of this part of the hut, he would be stricken by power coming from the *ubusisya* and he would have the impression that eyes are directed against him, and so be driven away.

[595] After these interesting communications I went to visit the hut of one of his wives, which still revealed the *isyenga*, the old-fashioned round structure of bamboo poles diverging from their upper end and thatched with grass[31].

241 784 9. The frequent walks in company with the chief or some of his *amafumu* gave me several opportunities for enquiries. On one occasion,

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[26] Cf. *Wilson*, Burial, p. 9: *unsyuka* (Sing.); *Mackenzie*, p. 191: *basyuka* (Karonga).

[27] Cf. *Mackenzie*, p. 275: *ifingira* (Karonga).

[278] [28] The pharmacological substance of the bark (Cortex Erythroploëi, „Sassa-bark") is the alcaloid Erythrophleïn which produces the same typical effects on the heart as the Digitalis-group (cf. *C. G. Santesson:* Pfeilgiftstudien XII. Arkiv för Botanik 27 A, No. 4, Stockholm 1935, p. 6).

[29] Cf. *Wilson*, Land Rights, p. 32; *Merensky*, p. 134; *Fülleborn*, p. 309.

[30] *amaka* is not a specific expression for „magical" or (religious) „supernatural" power, although, from the European standpoint this meaning may be connected with the word in specific cases, but generally it means any striking expression or effect of a quality of a person or object, e. g. *upiki eki ngalimo amaka*, in this wood is power. This word is, therefore, a parallel to the Austronesian, especially Polynesian word *mana*, examined in my treatise „Mana. The term of that what is exceedingly striking". Staatliches Forschungsinstitut für Völkerkunde. I. Reihe. Ethnographie. Vol. 2. Leipzig. 1922. If the Nyakyusa wishes to say that a phenomenon is "supernatural", then he connects it with Kyara, or he names it directly "Kiara" (cf. *Merensky*, p. 110 [197, 218]).

[31] Cf. *Fülleborn*, p. 377, fig. 140: Schematical average of a round-hut (as also to be found with the Nyakyusa still today).

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but I was astonished that this trap was erected relatively near to my tent on the border of the village of Katumba.

6. Fishing. Fishing is a much more common practice with the Nyakyusa than hunting. The old-established custom of poisoning fish in their smaller rivers is still widely used. The poison is derived from the *unkeredu* shrup. Its branches and leaves are broken off, reduced to small pieces between stones and then packed in a covering of grass to resemble a long cigar about 1 meter in length and 25 cm in width. The bundles prepared in such a manner are fixed between two rowes of stones placed across the river for this purpose. The poison gradually diffuses into the water, which takes on a green colour. The fish are soon affected by the poison and rise to the surface with gaping mouths. They are then easily caught with a scoop made from bamboo. The open end of a piece of bamboo is split into several sections and the splinters are bent apart and tied together with raffia to form a sort of funnel[1]. The fish are strung through their gills on small pliable sticks and roasted at home over a fire. All people are allowed to join in this fishing which to them is always a festive occasion in the cooler season.

Fishing in broader and deeper rivers, such as the lower Kiwira, is done by means of large fish-traps. They are made and repaired by men on the banks of the river. The traps are attached to poles rammed into the bed and almost invariably boats trying to reach the Lake Nyassa get struck on submerged poles. These large fish-traps strung across the river form quite an impressive sight. Looking up-stream, they look like the bows of little ships standing in a row.

7. Preparing food. With the Nyakusa the preparation of food is so exclusively the task of the women, that R. Thurnwald ist quite correct when says (Black and White in East Africa, London 1935, p. 157): "Menfolk starve if there are no women to prepare their meals". There is thus a very strong division of labour between the sexes, also noticable in the carrying of loads. For a young man to carry the load of an old woman or his sweetheart, whom perchance he might meet on the road, would be a grave violation of a rigid custom.

As the preparation of the food is the women's duty, also the grinding *(ukutika)* of the corn in a mortar *(ikituli)* with a pestle *(ikitiro)* which is the exclusive task of the female sex. The wife is always the first to rise in the morning to prepare breakfast. Usually, however, this is not

[1] NB. They are of the same kind as those of the Hottentots along the Great Fish River in South West Africa.